



THE EVENING HOURS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS OF
EMILE VERHAEREN

Cloth *12mo* \$1.00 net

THE SUNLIT HOURS

Cloth *12mo* \$1.00 net

AFTERNOON

Cloth *12mo* \$1.00 net

JOHN LANE COMPANY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

STATE LIBRARY
SALEM OREGON

THE EVENING HOURS

BY
EMILE VERHAEREN

AUTHOR OF
"THE SUNLIT HOURS," "AFTERNOON,"
ETC.

TRANSLATED BY
CHARLES R. MURPHY



NEW YORK
JOHN LANE COMPANY
MCMXVIII

WITHDRAWN
Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850

MASSACHUSETTS
STATE LIBRARY
ROBERT H. HARRIS

**COPYRIGHT, 1918,
BY JOHN LANE COMPANY**

**Press of
J. J. Little & Ives Co.
New York**

A
CELLE
QUI VIT
A
MES CÔTÉS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. "Tender Flowers, Light as the Sea's Foam"	13
II. "If It Be True"	15
III. "Dead is the Glycin and the Hawthorne Flower"	17
IV. "Draw Your Chair to Mine"	21
V. "Be Kind and Comforting to Us, Oh Light!	24
VI. "Alas, the Time of Crimson Phlox is Past"	26
VII. "The Evening Falls, the Moon is Gold"	28
VIII. "When You Store Away in Fragrant Shelves"	31
IX. "Fallen is the Leafage from Above"	33

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
X.	"When the Star-lit Heaven Broods Above Our House"	37
XI.	"That Very Love Which Made You be for Me"	39
XII.	"Those Clear Welcoming Flow- ers Along the Wall's Ex- tent"	41
XIII.	"When the Diamond Grains of Fresh Snow"	44
XIV.	"If Fate Has Saved Us from the Banal Sins"	46
XV.	"No, My Soul Has Never Tired of You!"	49
XVI.	"Ah, we are Happy Still and Proud to Live"	51
XVII.	"Alas, Must We Accept the Weight of Years"	53
XVIII.	"All Little Facts, the Things of No Account"	55
XIX.	"Come to Our Threshold Now, Oh Snow"	57

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	"When Our Clear Garden Lift- ed up Its Flow'rs" . . .	59
XXI.	"With Withered Hands I Touch Your Brow" . .	61
XXII.	"Our Hearts Once Burned in Joyous Days"	63
XXIII.	"This Wrinkled Winter when the Ruined Sun" . . .	65
XXIV.	"Perhaps"	67
XXV.	"Clasped About My Neck and Harbouring My Breast" .	69
XXVI.	"When You Shall Close These Eyes of Mine to Light" .	72

THE EVENING HOURS

I

Tender flowers, light as the sea's foam,
Graced our garden way;
The lapsing wind would give your hands
caress
And with your hair would play.

The shade was kind to our united steps
That wandered soberly;
And from the village a child's song arose
To fill infinity.

Our ponds extended in the autumn light
Beneath the guarding reed,
And the wood's forehead showed its
mobile crown
To pools upon the mead.

THE EVENING HOURS

And we, who knew our hearts were mur-
muring

In union but one prayer,
Thought that it was our peaceful life the
eve

Showed unveiled there.

Supremely then you saw the sky aglow

For a farewell caress;

And long and long you looked on it with
eyes

Filled with mute tenderness.

II

If it be true
That garden flower or meadow tree
May hold still any memory
Of lovers past who once looked on
Their splendour or their purity,
So shall our love return once more
In that long hour of long regret
To give the rose, or in the oak restore,
Its sweetness or its strength,
Ere death come yet.

Thus shall it survive unconquerèd
Within the glory that belongs to simple
things,

THE EVENING HOURS

And find a joy again in light that cleaves
The sky on summer break of day,
And find a joy again
In the sweet rain
That dwells in drops on hanging leaves.

And if on some fair eve, from depths of
space,
Should come two lovers hand in hand,
The oak, like a large and puissant wing
Would reach its shadow out to where they
stand,
And the rose would give them of its per-
fumed grace.

III

Dead is the glycin and the hawthorne
flower;

But now is the time when heather-bloom
is seen,

And on this so calm eve the rustling wind
Brings you the fragrance of the starved
Campine.

Love and breathe them, thinking of its
fate;

Over that rugged soil the storm-wind
lives;

Sand and sea have made of it their prey,
Yet of the little left, it ever gives.

THE EVENING HOURS

Of old, though autumn came, we dwelled
with it,

With plain and forest, with the storm
and light,

Until the angels of the Christmas time
Inscribed its legend with their winged
flight.

Your heart became more simple and more
sure;

We loved the villagers and the forlorn
Old women who would speak of their
great age

And of old spinning-wheels their hands
had worn.

Our quiet house upon the misty heath
Was frank and welcoming to all who
came;

THE EVENING HOURS

Its roof was dear to us, its door and sill,
And hearth long blackened by familiar
flame.

When over vast, pale, measureless repose
The total splendour of the night was set,
A lesson of deep silence we received,
Whose ardour never shall our souls for-
get.

Since we were more alone amid the plain,
The dawn and evening entered more
our thought,
Our eyes were franker and our hearts
more sweet
And with the world's desire more fully
fraught.

THE EVENING HOURS

We found content in not exacting it;
The sadness, even, of the days was kind,
And the rare sunlight of the autumn's end
Charmed us the more that it seemed
weak and blind.

Dead is the glycin and the hawthorne
flower;
But now are the days when heather-
bloom is seen,
Remember these, and let the rustling wind
Bring you the fragrance of the starved
Campine.

IV

Draw your chair to mine
And stretch your hands to the hearth,
That I may see between your fingers
Shine
The ancient flame;
And look upon the fire
Quietly, with your eyes
That have no fear of any light,
So that for me they be the same,
Yet franker when the blaze leaps higher
Making them as from deep within you,
bright.

Ah, how fair still is our life and fain!
When the clock strikes out its notes of
gold

THE EVENING HOURS

And I approach you and as a flower hold;
And a fever slow and pure,
Which we will not to restrain,
Leads the kiss, marvellous and sure,
From hand to brow, from brow to lips
again.

How well I love you, O my clear beloved,
Your swooning body, caressing and
caressed,
In whose depth of joy I almost drown.
All is more dear to me, your lips, your
arms close-pressed,
And your kind bosom whereon my tired
head
After the rapture you bestow, sinks down
Quietly, near your heart to find its rest.

THE EVENING HOURS

I love you still more after love's sharp
pain

When your goodness still more sure and
motherly

Brings repose to passion's ardency,

And, when desire has cried aloud its will,

I hear approach familiar joy again,

With steps that almost silence are, it is so
still.

V

Be kind and comforting to us, oh light!
And bathe our foreheads now, oh wintry
ray!
When we two issue forth this afternoon
To breathe together the last warmth of
day.

We loved you formerly with such a pride,
With such a love as our two souls could
lend,
That a supreme and sweet and friendly
flame
Is due us now that we await the end.

THE EVENING HOURS

You are that which no man may forget,
From dawn that smites his arm uncon-
quered
To evening when you sleep within his eyes
Your strength abolished and your
splendour dead.

Always for us you were the seen desire
Spreading through all, luminous and
free,
That with impassioned ardour deep and
high
Seemed from our heart to seek infinity.

VI

Alas the time of crimson phlox is past
And of proud roses brightening the
gate.

What matter? Still I love with all my
heart

Our garden, tho' deflow'ed and deso-
late.

More dear than are the joyous summer
noons,

My garden is that now forlornly
grieves;

Oh the last perfumes languidly exhaled
By a late flower in the lingering leaves!

THE EVENING HOURS

This evening I wandered in the paths
Over the plants my fervent touch to
pass,
And falling on my knees I pressed my
lips
To the wet earth among the trembling
grass.

And now that it is dying and the night
Has misted all the garden with its
breath,
My being that so dwells in all this ruin
Shall learn to die in sharing thus its
death.

VII

The evening falls, the moon is gold. . . .

Before the day is spent
Go out and wander in the garden walks
And pluck with gentle hands
The few remaining flowers that on their
 stalks
Are not yet sadly bent toward the mould.

What matter if their foliage be wan?
We still admire and love,
And still their chalices are beautiful above
The stems they rest upon.

THE EVENING HOURS

You wander mid the borders here and
there

Along a lonely path,
And the flowers you bear
Tremble in your hand that shudders as it
takes.

And now your dreamy fingers
Reverently shape the sere
Roses wherein autumn lingers,
Weaving them with many a tear,
Into a crown of pale, clear flakes.

The last light dwells upon your eyes and
brow
And your slow steps are sad and quiet
now. . . .

Slowly, at the vesper, through the gloam,
With empty hands you wandered home,

THE EVENING HOURS

Leaving, upon a little humid mound,
On the path that to our doorway led,
The pale circlet that your fingers bound.
And I knew that in our garden perishèd,
Where winds now pass like cohorts over-
head,
You would give flower again for one last
time,
To our youth that lies upon the ground
Dead. . . .

VIII

When you store away in fragrant shelves,
Some autumn eve, the fruits of orchard
trees,
I seem to see you calmly ranging there
Our old, but fresh and perfumed mem-
ories.

And love returns for them as once they
were,
The wind on lips and sunlight in my
eyes;
I see the vanished moments once again,
Their joy, their mirth, their fevers and
their cries.

THE EVENING HOURS

The past comes back to life with such desire

To be the present with its force again,
That half-extinct fires burn with sudden
flame,

My heart exults and swoons as though
in pain.

Oh fruits that glow amid the autumn
shadows,

Jewels fallen from the summer's string
Of gems, illumining our sombre hours,
What red awakening is this you bring!

IX

Fallen is the leafage from above
That covered all the garden with its
shade;
See, between the naked boughs far off
The village roofs to the horizon fade.

While summer flamed its joy, neither of
us
Saw them clustered there so near our
home;
But to-day, with leaf and flower dead,
Into our thinking they more often come.

THE EVENING HOURS

Others are living there behind those walls
And those worn thresholds with the
porch above,
Having for only friends the wind and
rain
And the lighted lamp to give them love.

In the fall of eve, when fires are lit,
And the pauses of the clock they heed,
Dear, as to us, the silence is to them,
The thoughts within their eyes that they
may read.

Those hours of intimacy naught disturbs,
Of tender and profound tranquillity,
Blessing the instant past for having been
And finding dearer yet the one to be.

THE EVENING HOURS

See how they hold between their trembling
hands

A happiness of pain and pleasure born;
Known to each the other's body old
And aged eyes by the same sorrows
worn.

The flowers of their life, they love them
faded,

The final perfume and the beauty brief,
And heavy memory of glory waning,
Wasting in time's garden, leaf by leaf.

Deep in their warmth of human feeling
hid,

From the winter sheltered and recluse,

THE EVENING HOURS

Nothing abases them or makes them pine
And plead for days they are content to
lose.

The quiet folk of those old villages,
What neighbours are they to our happiness!
And how we find our own tears in their
eyes,
Our strength and ardour in their fear-
lessness!

Down there, beneath their roofs, by win-
dowside
Or seated by the glowing fireside, thus,
Perhaps on such a night of wind and wet,
What we have thought of them they
think of us.

X

When the star-lit heaven broods above our
house

We sit in silence during many hours
Beneath its soft intensity of light
To feel more ardent still these selves
of ours.

The silver stars are drifting on their way;
Beneath their flame and all their glis-
tening

The great night is deeper and more deep;
Such calm there is, the sea is listening!

THE EVENING HOURS

What matter if the sea itself be still,
If in this infinity so fair,
Pregnant now with yet unvisioned power,
Our beating hearts make all the silence
there?

XI

That very love which made you be for me
A splendid garden wherein moving tree
Made shadow over sward and docile rose,
Makes you the shelter where I now repose.

There garnered are your flowers of desire,
Your lucent goodness and your gentle fire;
But all within a peace profound are furled
Against harsh winter winds that scar the
world.

My happiness is warmed within your
arms;
Each little tender word you whisper
charms

THE EVENING HOURS

My ear with as familiar a delight
As in the time when lilacs blossomed white.

Your clear and merry humour daily cheers
And triumphs over the distress of years;
And you yourself smile at the silver hairs
That your lovely head so gaily wears.

When to my searching kiss your head you
 bow,
I care not for the lines that mark your
 brow,
Nor for a vein that traces its bold line
Upon your hands now safely held in mine.

You fear not; and you know most certainly
That nothing dies that dares love loyally,
And that the flame which nourishes us so
Feeds upon ruin's self that it may grow.

XII

Those clear welcoming flowers along the
wall's extent

Will be no longer waiting for us at our
return;

The silken waters that prolonged till they
were spent,

Under a pure sweet sky no longer reach
and yearn.

Of our melancholy plains the flying birds
are shy;

Over the marshes pale mists begin to
crawl;

THE EVENING HOURS

Autumn, winter! Winter, autumn!—oh
the cry!

In the forest do you hear the dead wood
fall?

Our garden is no longer bridegroom of
the light,

Where once we saw the phlox in glorious
surge and flare;

Gladioli, in dust, once violent, upright,

Lingeringly have lain them down to
perish there.

All is without strength or beauty, without
fire,

Fleeing and quailing and crumbling and
passing sadly by;

THE EVENING HOURS

Oh, turn on me your eyes of light, for I
desire

There to seek a corner of our early
sky!

It is there alone our light may still abide,
The light that filled the garden once
for you and me,

Long ago, when our lily lifted its white
pride

And hollyhocks were an ascending
ardency.

XIII

When the diamond grains of fresh snow
On our threshold lie,
I hear your steps that come and go
In the room near by.

You move the clear mirror that beside
The window stood,
And your bunch of keys strikes the drawer
Of the chest of wood.

I hear you stirring now the fire—
The live coal flares;
And hear you place by silent walls
The silent chairs.

THE EVENING HOURS

I hear you wipe the dust from objects
As you pass,
And your ring resounds against the side
Of a vibrant glass.

And happier am I still, this eve,
With your presence dear—
To feel you close, and not to see,
But always hear.

XIV

If fate has saved us from the banal sins
Of cowardly untruth and sad pretence,
It is because we would have no constraint
Whose yoke should bend our will with
violence.

Free and sunlit on your road you fared,
Strewing with flowers of will your
flowers of love;
Pausing to sustain me when my head
Bowed to the weight of doubt or fear
above.

THE EVENING HOURS

Always you were of gesture kind and
frank,
Knowing my heart for you forever
burned;
For if I loved another—could it be?—
Always it was to your heart I returned.

So pure your eyes were in their weeping
that
My truth to you became my only lord;
I spoke to you then sweet and sacred
words,
Your sorrow and your pardon were
your sword.

I fell asleep at evening on your breast,
Glad with return from distance false and
bleak

THE EVENING HOURS

To warmth of spring within us, glad
within

Your open arms captivity to seek.

XV

No, my soul has never tired of you!

In the time of June you said to me:

"If I thought, beloved, if I thought

That my love would ever weary you,

With my sad thoughts and my lonely
heart,

No matter where, I should depart. . . ."

And sweetly sought the kiss I gave anew.

And you said again:

"One loses everything, life would repay;

What though it be of gold,

THE EVENING HOURS

The chain
That in one harbour's ring can hold
Our human ships to-day?"

And sweetly wept for pain you could not
say.

And you said
Again and yet again:
"Let us separate, before we be untrue;
Our life's too pure and high
To draw it out from fault to fault, and
drain
It wearily away." . . . You sought to fly
From me whose desperate hands strove to
retain.

No, my soul has never tired of you!

XVI

Ah, we are happy still and proud to live
When the last ray, that's seen and then
is lost,

Brightens an instant the poor flowers of
rime

Engraved upon our window by the frost.

Life leaps within us and hope sweeps us
on;

And our garden, though it be now old,
Though its paths be strewn with fallen
boughs,

Seems living, pure and clear and lit with
gold.

THE EVENING HOURS

Something invades our blood, intrepid,
 bright,
And urges us to incarnate again
Immense, full summer in the fervid kiss
 That desperately we give each other
 then.

XVII

Alas, must we accept the weight of years
And find us nothing more than tranquil
folk

Who give each other infantile caress
At eve, when hearth is quick with flame
and smoke?

Our dear belongings, shall they see us then
Creeping from the hearth to wooden
chest,
To reach the window leaning on the wall,
Sitting to give our tottering bodies rest?

THE EVENING HOURS

If such a day must then affirm our ruin
And show the torpor brain or body
fears,
In spite of this fate we shall not complain,
But keep within our breasts our captive
tears.

For we shall guard these eyes of ours to
watch
For morn to follow night so pitiful,
And see the sun of dawn burn on this life,
Making of earth itself a miracle.

XVIII

All little facts, the things of no account,
A letter, date, an anniversary,
A word that's spoken as on days long past,
Exalt, on these long evenings, you and
me.

We solemnise, we two, these simple things
And count and recount all these gems of
ours,
So that what is left of our high selves
May face valiantly these sombre hours.

And we are jealous more than it is meet
Of these poor, gentle, friendly mem-
ories

THE EVENING HOURS

Who seat themselves with us beside the
fire

With winter flowers laid across thin
knees.

And the bread of happiness which once
We did partake of, now they sit and
eat;

The bread on which our love has fed so
long

That now it finds the very crumbs are
sweet.

XIX

Come to our threshold now, oh snow,
Strew thy pallid ash,
Oh peaceful and slow falling snow;
The linden in the garden hangs its
 branches low
And to the sky no flights of wood-larks go.

Oh snow,
Who warmest and dost shield
The corn that is hardly sprung
With the moss, with the down
Strewn on the spreading field!
Silent snow, oh friendly one
To houses sleeping in the morning calm,

THE EVENING HOURS

Cover our roof and brush our window-
frames;

Oh luminous snow, into our very soul
To find a way do thou not scorn,
Snow that warmest still our last of dreams
Like the springing corn.

XX

When our clear garden lifted up its
flow'rs

The self-accusations made by each
For failure of our love, broke into speech
In passionate hours;
And needed pardon offered and new peace
And explanations of our miseries
And tears that wet our sad and truthful
eyes

Gave love increase.

But in these months of dreary rain
When all retires to earth again,
When even light is fain
To find its war with darkness vain,

THE EVENING HOURS

No longer are our souls so strong and
proud
That, rapturously, they should confess
aloud.

In lowered voice our sins we say,
Though still in tenderness, not scorn;
But 'tis at twilight now and not at morn.
Sometimes we even count them, wrong by
wrong,
Like things that one counts over
And puts away;
And their folly or their hurt to cover
We argue long.

XXI

With withered hands I touch your brow
And part your hair and kiss—(as the
day dies
And you are briefly sleeping by the hearth)
Beneath long lashes hid, your fervent
eyes.

Oh the dear tenderness of sinking day!
I think of the long years whose flight we
saw,
And suddenly your life in them appears
So perfect that my love is filled with
awe.

THE EVENING HOURS

And as in that time when we were be-
trothed,

Ardour again is in me and has brought
Desire to kneel and touch your beating
breast

With fingers that are chaste as is my
thought.

XXII

Our hearts once burned in joyous days
With love as luminous as high,
But age to-day has made us weak
With faults we dare deny.

Thou dost not nourish us, oh will,
By thine ardour in the strife,
But soft benevolence alone
Colours now our life.

We near thy brink of setting, Love,
And try to hide our frailty's pain
In banal words and poor discourse
Of wisdom slow and vain.

THE EVENING HOURS

How sad the future then would be,
If when our days grow wintrier
There flame not forth the memory
Of the proud souls we were.

XXIII

This wrinkled winter when the ruined sun
Founders in the west and sinks below,
I love to say your name, so grave and
 slow,
While the clock strikes another day now
 done.

And saying it so ravishes my voice
That from my lips it sinks into my heart,
And among all sweet words that there
 have part,
Makes me the most ardently rejoice.

THE EVENING HOURS

And in the wind of dawn or evening's
breath

Changeless I reiterate the theme;

Oh, think with what a passion, strong,
supreme,

Shall I pronounce it at the hour of death!

XXIV

Perhaps,
On my last day,
Perhaps,
Across my window sill,
The sunlight frail and still
Will fall and for a moment stay. . . .

My hands—my hands then poor and
witherèd—
By its glory will be made to gold;
Slowly its kiss will glide, profound and
bright,
For the last time upon my mouth and
head;

THE EVENING HOURS

And the flowers of my eyes, pale yet bold,
Before they close, shall render back its
light.

Sun, I loved your strength and clarity, in-
deed!

My sweet and fiery poems at their height
Have held you captive in the heart of
them;

Like field of wheat that surges in the might
Of summer wind my words exalted you.

Oh sun, who bring to birth and flower the
stem,

Oh immense friend, of whom our pride
has need,

In that so grave, imperious hour and new,
When my old heart sadly endures the test,
Be you still its witness and its guest!

XXV

Clasped about my neck and harbouring my
breast,

Ah your so dear hands now and their
slow caress,

When I tell you, in the evening, how my
strength

Grows leaden day by day with weight of
feebleness!

You wish it not that I become shadow and
ruin

Like all those who obey the gloomy
night's behests,

THE EVENING HOURS

Though it be with laurel in their mournful
hands

And glory sleeping in their hollow
breasts.

Ah how time's harsh law is softened by
your love

And how your lovely dream disconsolate
tears would stem;

For the first and only time you nurse with
lies

My heart that finds excuse and gives
you thanks for them.

Which, however, knows all ardour is in
vain

Against what is and all that must be in
the strife,

THE EVENING HOURS

And that perhaps there is profounder happiness

To end thus in your eyes my lovely
human life.

XXVI

When you shall close these eyes of mine
to light,

Oh kiss them long—for all that love
afire

May hope to give they shall have given
you

In that last look of ultimate desire.

Beneath the moveless glow of candle light,

Oh lean to them your face so fain and
brave

That on them be impressed this sight
alone

That they shall keep forever in the
grave.

THE EVENING HOURS

And may I feel, before the tomb is mine,
 Upon the pure, white bed our hands
 that seek

Each other once again, and near my head
 Feel for the last time repose your cheek;

And know that I shall go away with heart
 Burning still for you so passionately
That even through the mute and stony
 earth

The dead themselves shall feel its
 ardency!



S0-BPN-403

